

pointed out, they are not just ambassadors to countries, they are ambassadors to international organizations.

We are not at full strength on economic international organizations. We are not at full strength on arms control negotiations because we don't have our key person there—not because that person is controversial, not because the President has elected someone who is controversial but to the contrary. Almost all of these nominations are non-controversial and waiting for months because the Republicans will not allow a vote.

Somebody said: OK. Don't we need a lot of floor time to debate this? Look at the record. Look how much floor debate has been spent on approving these nominations. I am willing to wager—although we can't wager on the floor of the Senate. I am willing to point out that if we bring these nominations to floor consideration, in almost every case there will be virtually no debate, and they will be approved by an overwhelming majority, if not a unanimous vote.

We are hurting our country. We are hurting the reputation of the United States. We are supposedly the major power. Yet we can't get a CEO confirmed to head our embassies abroad.

It is also unfair to the people who are making a sacrifice for public service. As Senator MENENDEZ pointed out, a large number of these nominees were ambassadorships or career diplomats. These are not political appointments, these are career people who have made their career serving their country.

Many have young families. What do they do about school enrollment in September? Do they enroll their children in the school where they are now or do they wait to see if they will be confirmed and enroll them in the country in which they will be serving? Why are we putting people who are serving their country through that type of uncertainty and anxiety? But we are. We are, by failing to move in a timely way the nominations that have been brought forward to us.

I will just mention one other example. I started with the hearing I chaired today on behalf of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee dealing with four nominees. One was the Ambassador to Vietnam. I was just recently in Vietnam. I met with our current Ambassador, Ambassador Shear. I mention that because he has been nominated to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia, so he is leaving Vietnam. We had a hearing today on the next Ambassador to Vietnam—a well-qualified career diplomat. The question is: Are we going to have the orderly change of command in Vietnam, a country critically important to U.S. interests? We are negotiating a Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. Part of that involves good governance changes that we expect in Vietnam. We expect our Ambassador to be there to negotiate these issues. The question is: Will we have that orderly transfer?

Two career people seeking to move forward in their careers are being held up by inaction on the floor of the Senate.

I come to the last point I wish to make. Yes, we are hurting the United States in not having these confirmed CEOs. It is creating unfairness to the families of people who want to serve our country—and the uncertainty that is there. But it is also hurting the Senate because it is our responsibility to act on Presidential appointments. It is our responsibility to act in a timely, thoughtful way. We are not carrying out that responsibility. By the Republicans obstructing votes on the President's nominations on key foreign policy positions, we are not carrying out our responsibility—an oath that we took to serve in the Senate to protect the interests of this country. It is our responsibility to act on these nominations in a timely way, and we have not done that because of the obstructionism of the Republicans.

I urge my colleagues to put our national interests first. Let us move forward with our responsibility. The committee has carried out its responsibility and, quite frankly, the chairman has carried that out in a very bipartisan way. We have had cooperation between Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We have carried out our responsibility. Now it is time for the Senate to carry out its responsibility, for the Republicans to allow us to vote in a timely way on this backlog of nominees for critical foreign policy positions. I urge my colleagues to allow us to move forward in the best interests of our country and in respect for those who have stepped forward to serve our country, to carry out the responsibilities we all swore to uphold in the Senate.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, as a sponsor of the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014, I am pleased the Senate has risen to the occasion and come together on this critical leg-

islation. Although I was still in Kansas attending to my family, I would have joined my colleagues in voting aye on Rollcall vote No. 187, a bipartisan plan to help make certain veterans receive the access to quality, timely care they deserve. I will continue to work to address the challenges and problems at the Department of Veterans Affairs so our Nation's heroes have a VA worthy of their service.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR MYLE HAMMOND

• Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I wish to honor the service of a great Marine infantryman, Maj. Myle Hammond. Major Hammond will be retiring from the Marine Corps after more than 20 years of dedicated service to our country. On this occasion, I believe it is fitting to recognize his contribution to the Marine Corps, the Senate, and the Nation.

Major Hammond's career included three combat tours in Iraq, a tour with the Ceremonial Honor Guard at Marine Barracks, Washington, 3 years in the Marine Corps Senate Liaison Office, and 1 year working as a congressional fellow in my office. A marine's marine, Myle's distinguished service in combat and in garrison is emblematic of the caliber of his character.

I was proud to welcome Myle into my office, and he exceeded every expectation. His indepth knowledge of the Marine Corps and the legislative process made him an invaluable member of my staff. At the conclusion of his fellowship, Myle moved on to be the deputy director of the Marine Senate Liaison. His quick wit and strategic thinking were vital in guiding the Marine Corps senior leadership through the Senate. His efforts were instrumental in ensuring the completion of the MV-22B acquisition program, executing a responsible drawdown of the Marine Corps, and recognizing the contributions of the first African-American marines through the award of the Congressional Gold Medal in tribute to the Montford Point Marines.

A decorated combat veteran and proud father, Myle is a model American to us all. As Myle hangs up his uniform, he will remain in Virginia with his wife Rani and their two young children, Mason and Sydney. Although his absence will be felt in the Marine Corps and in Congress, I trust that his contributions in the private sector will equal those of his public service.

I share the sentiments of many Senators in my gratitude and appreciation to Major Hammond for his outstanding leadership and his unwavering dedication to the Marine Corps and the country. I wish Myle and his family all the best upon his retirement.●

DES MOINES COUNTY, IOWA

• Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, the strength of my State of Iowa lies in its